

My Heber Valley Roots

BY RALPH B. MONTGOMERY

From John Crook's Diary Provided by
Clark J and Phyllis Crook

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Continuation From
John Crook's Diary

(In the previous article from Crook's diary John told of leaving England and coming to America by way of New Orleans, St. Louis, Council Bluffs and by wagon train to Provo, Utah. He married Mary Giles, built a home in Provo, and learned the hardships of being a pioneer. We take up his story in the winter of 1856-57.) RBM

The winter of 1856-57 was very severe. Thomas Rasband and I hauled willows from the river bottoms for firewood. This

made very poor firewood. When we found that parties were going up on the mountains and sliding timbers down on the snow we all started this game too. We got lots of wood then and got logs to make lumber for our buildings next summer. I got three acres of land in the fort field for my share of the divide. The spring time came around and time to put in crops. I told Father Giles I had never done any plowing but with his help I learned how and we raised a big crop. We had 80 bushels of wheat and 75 bushels of potatoes. One of my oxen died but we had grain and potatoes, plenty for bread and to buy another ox.

On 24th July 1857 word came that the U.S. was sending an army to exterminate the Mormons and a whole load of ropes to hang our leaders. Preparations were made to fortify all passes into Utah. A company of infantry was called from Provo to Echo Canyon. Thomas Rasband, George Giles, Fred Giles and I were in the company. William Nuttall was captain when called out. First camped on the Provo River about the time of October conference. We arrived in Echo Canyon about October 10th. We camped in a narrow pass about four miles up from Weber River. Made a dam in the creek and built fortifications on rocks. I was selected cook for our platoon, ten men. They drilled us every morning, provisions were scarce, sometimes all flour and then again all meat. Heavy snows on the mountains caused delays in arrival of supply teams. We came home about the 10th of December, 1857."

(The U.S. troops stayed the winter of 1856-57 at Fort Bridger. Col. Kane came by way of California and counseled with Church authorities to allow the soldiers to pass through Salt Lake City in 1858 to a camp 40 miles beyond and to allow Governor Cummings to take his place in state government.) RBM

During 1857 when many men were idle Brigham Young proposed to build a road through Provo Canyon to Provo Valley (Heber Valley). While the road was being built, surveyor James C. Snow and a company of men surveyed North field one and a half mile square. In Sept. the road was completed and freight teams passed through to Camp Floyd.

In October another company of men and surveyor came up and surveyed a square mile west and south of Heber City. I was lead chain man. I received 25 acres of land and ten dollars in

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cash for surveying. Through the winter of 1858 and '59 several meetings were held in Provo City with regard to settling the Provo valley. With William Meeks as presiding Elder an organization was effected. On the last day of April, 1859 the following brethren started for the valley with three teams, plows, grain and provisions: Thomas Rasband, John Crook, C. N. Carrol, John and James Carlyle, John Jordan, Jesse Bond, William Giles, William Carpenter. Night came on in the canyon when we reached a snow slide at the Blue dugway one mile south of South Park and we made camp. Next morning we pulled wagons to pieces packed upon slide, hitched on cattle, moved on again and camped at the ranch of Wm. M. Wall first day of May. Next morning moved on and came to Daniels ranch, creek washed deep, found a beaver dam, crossed teams on ice dam. Two miles farther came to Wm. Meeks ranch and camped there for breakfast, and then walked on foot to the proposed site of Heber City. Looking north we saw two black objects moving and supposed them to be animals. We started for them and found two teams plowing, Wm. Davis and son with two yoke of cattle and Robert Broadhead and James Davis with two yoke of cattle. They had been there three days and got about one acre plowed each. They came from Nephi, Juab county. We moved our camp to theirs, now called London Springs. We built wick-ups of willows and grass large enough to shelter 30 men when necessary and on the fifth of May we were plowing. Thomas Rasband and I doubled teams, James Carlyle (James Carlisle, John Crook's brother-in-law) with two yoke.

We harvested some 80 bushels of wheat in the fall. The summer was very warm and we raised some watermelons also. Along in June the west half of Heber was laid off in city lots by Jesse Fuller, eight blocks south and five and a half blocks west. Myself and C. N. Carrol acting as chairmen. In

July we moved camp to the city, and then commenced hauling logs and building a house. Before this in June while camping at Springs we built forty rods of fence on east string of north field, brother Rasband and myself working together. We hauled two loads of poles a day, only about two miles to haul and I think we put the same into fence each day until our portion was complete.

The first baby born in the valley was to Wm. Davidson and wife. They named it Timpanogos. The second baby born was our daughter, Sarah, on November 28, 1859. The winter of 1859-60 was very severe. In hauling wood from river on wagons even in December could hear wagons squeak on the snow a mile or two. We built our houses in a fort style, forty rods square, 4 rods on fort line to each family as a protection against Indians. Seventeen families stayed all winter in fort line. We hauled our grain to provo 28 miles to grind into flour. After Christmas steady cold weather prevailed until the first Thursday in March. We held fast meeting in Thomas Rasband's house, and all hands prayed fervently to the Lord to temper the elements and cause the snow to melt, that we might be able to put in crops in the season thereof. And by noon the eaves on the north side of the house were dripping water from the snow melting, and by the middle of the month snow was about all gone.

Many families moved from Provo this month. On about the 23rd all hands turned out and went east of Heber to Springs and Lake creek. Plowing furrows and brought them all into one channel. Many families moved to Heber, 1860, until I believe the fort was about filled up, some 40 families. The season was very favorable, raising large crops. Built log meeting house in July and celebrated Pioneer day in the building. Were going to build a bowery but John M. Murdock suggested that we complete the house and we did so. On the 14th

of July Wm. Fenn was found drowned in Provo river. The river was high and in crossing on foot the current took him down. He had been in the stream about two weeks. Had to move him on a sheet, dug a hole on bank of river and buried him there. Father Wood acted as coroner.

Commenced cutting logs this year to build house on City lot. Many people have built houses on their City lots. Last week in August harvesting barley. Harvested wheat on Sept. 3rd. Hauling logs and poles from river most all winter of 1860 and 61. 800 poles hauled on sled. Also some for Jonathan Clegg.

About Apr. 1st, 1861 commenced plowing. Henry Luke and I joined teams and broke up land on 20 acres in sec. 31, my homestead. Put in some gardens and fenced it. July 1861 To Bench creek and hauling logs to saw mill for lumber for house. July 24 to 30 Took some tithing to S.L. City and got our Endowments. Nov. 9, 1861 Moved into house on City Lot - double log house.

(When Wasatch Stake was organized in 1877 and Heber divided into East and West Wards, John Crook was chosen first counselor to Bishop William Forman of the Heber West Ward. John was especially interested in music, genealogy and history and was considered one of Wasatch County's best historians. He was the first choir leader in Heber. His vocation was farming and stock raising, and he was the owner of the first red sandstone quarries in Heber Valley. John Crook died March 31, 1921, at the age of eighty-nine years. He was one of the stalwart builders of Heber Valley. I hope the excerpts from his diary has given an insight to the valor and courage of our early pioneers.) RBM

If you are interested in having your Heber Valley Roots published send the names of yourself, your parents and grandparents who were born before 1900 to Ralph B. Montgomery, 4288 Holloway Drive, Salt Lake City, UT 84124 or call 801-277-1014 or email to rmontgom23@msn.com.